

REVISED VERSION

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
12 October 2000 (12.10.2000)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 00/60487 A1

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: G06F 17/60

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US00/08673

(22) International Filing Date: 31 March 2000 (31.03.2000)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
09/285,281 2 April 1999 (02.04.1999) US

(71) Applicant: FLEET CREDIT CARD SERVICES, L.P.
[US/US]; 101 Gibraltar Road, Horsham, RI 19044 (US).

(72) Inventor: WILCOX, Warren, S.; Regency Towers, Apt.
#206, 1003 Easton Road, Willow Grove, PA 19090 (US).

(74) Agent: JACKSON, Arthur, E.; Dechert Price & Rhoads,
Princeton Pike Corporate Center, P.O. Box 5218, Princeton,
NJ 08543 (US).

(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

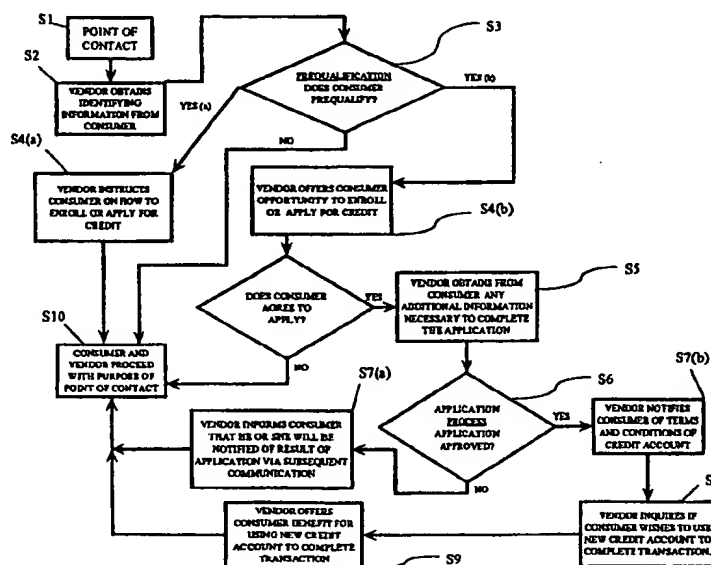
(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

- With international search report.
- Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments.

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: CREDIT PREQUALIFICATION AND GRANTING SYSTEM AND METHOD



(57) Abstract: A system and method for prequalifying a consumer for credit and selectively offering an opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account to the consumer only if the consumer satisfies certain preselection criteria. More particularly, the invention relates to a system and method for prequalifying and selectively offering an opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account (S4(b)) only to consumers satisfying certain preselection criteria, wherein individual consumers are automatically prequalified (S3) for credit at a point of contact between the consumer and a vendor (S10) and wherein the individual consumers are unaware that they are being prequalified.

WO 00/60487 A1



(88) Date of publication of the revised international search report:
14 December 2000

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(15) Information about Correction:
see PCT Gazette No. 50/2000 of 14 December 2000, Section II

REVISED
VERSION

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US00/08673

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : G06F 17/60
US CL : 705/35, 39, 38;

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 705/35, 39, 38, 1; 235/375, 379, 380

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
DIALOG files: 15, 9, 623, 810, 275, 624, 813, 636, 621, 16, 160, 148, 20, 625, 268, 626, 267. search terms: credit, loan, prequalify/prequalification, grant, preselect, criteria, consumer, customer, user, vendor, database, file, data, enroll, apply, account, application, computer, processor. IEEE DATABASE: search terms same as above

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,025,138 A (CUERVO) 18 June 1991 (18.06.1991), entirety	1-18
X	US 5,239,462 A (JONES et al), 24 August 1993 (24.08.1993), columns 3 and 5-8	1-18
X	US 5,274,547 A (ZOFFEL et al) 28 December 1993 (28.12.1993) entirety	1-18
X	US 5,611,052 A (DYKSTRA et al) 11 March 1997 (11.03.1997) entirety	1-18
X	US 5,797,133 A (JONES et al) 18 August 1998 (18.08.1998) entirety	1-18
Y	US 5,809,478 A (GRECO et al) 15 September 1998 (15.09.1998) entirety	1-18
A	McGINNIS, P., 'The Place of Technology in Generating Credit Opportunities', Journal of Lending & Credit Risk Management, v79, n10, p. 15-24, June 1997. Dialog file 268: Banking Information Services Dialog Accession # 00312057.	1-18
A	'Reps Offer Customers Instant Credit Approval. (Trans Leasing International's Instant Access Program)', Health Industry Today, v54, n4, p. 20(1), April, 1991. Dialog file 148: Gale Group Trade & Industry DB. Dialog Accession # 05173105.	1-18
A	SULLIVAN, D., 'Scoring Borrower Risk. (Credit Scoring)', Mortgage Banking, v55, n2, p.94(5), Nov. 1994. Dialog file 148: Gale Group Trade & Industry DB. Dialog Accession # 07621976.	1-18



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	"T"
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"E" earlier application or patent published on or after the international filing date	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&" document member of the same patent family
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

22 May 2000 (22.05.2000)

Date of mailing of the international search report

24 OCT 2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Box PCT
Washington, D.C. 20231

Facsimile No. (703)305-3230

Authorized officer

Tod E Swann

Telephone No. 703-308-7791

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US00/08673

C (Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	SCHMITT, S., 'CUs and Remote Services. (Credit Unions and Computer-based Remote Services)', Credit Union Executive, v36, n5, p.8(5), Sep/Oct. 1996. Dialog file 148: Gale Group Trade & Industry DB. Dialog Accession # 08991353.	1-18
A	MIDDLETON, R., 'Lending by the Numbers: Credit-review Software is Coolly Objective. How will you fare?', Business Week, n3599, p. 16, Oct. 12, 1998. Dialog file 623: Business Week, Dialog Accession # 00745501.	1-18
A	BRILL, J., 'The Importance of Credit Scoring Models in Improving Cash Flow and Collections', Business Credit, v100, n1, p.16-17, Jan. 1998. Dialog file 15: ABI/INFORM ®. Dialog Accession # 01566656.	1-18

services, when a vendor calls or electronically contacts a consumer to offer for sale goods and/or services, or when a vendor calls or electronically contacts a consumer to provide product or service information.

5 In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, a system and method for prequalifying consumers for credit is provided, including: (a) automatically prequalifying a consumer for credit at a point of contact with a vendor; (b) selectively offering an opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account only if the consumer satisfies certain preselection criteria; and, (c) instructing the consumer on how to enroll or apply for the credit account; wherein the consumer is unaware that he or she is being
10 prequalified; wherein the prequalification process is facilitated using information obtained from the consumer by the vendor during the point of contact or at some previous time, which information may include, for example, one or more of the following: the consumer's name, the consumer's home address, the consumer's shipping address, the consumer's social security number, the consumer's home telephone number and the
15 consumer's e-mail address; and wherein the offer to enroll or apply for the credit account is made during the point of contact.

In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, a system and method for prequalifying consumers for credit is provided, including: (a) automatically prequalifying a consumer for credit at a point of contact with a vendor; (b) selectively
20 offering an opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account only if the consumer satisfies certain preselection criteria; (c) obtaining from the consumer any additional information needed to complete an enrollment or credit application for the credit account; (d) processing the application; and, (e) immediately notifying the consumer of the results of the application, optionally, the consumer is immediately notified of the
25 results of the application only if the consumer qualifies for a credit account; wherein the consumer is unaware that he or she is being prequalified; wherein the prequalification process is facilitated using information obtained from the consumer by the vendor during the point of contact or at some previous time, which information may include, for

example, one or more of the following: the consumer's name, the consumer's home address, the consumer's shipping address, the consumer's social security number, the consumer's home telephone number, and the consumer's e-mail address; and wherein the offer to enroll or apply for the credit account is made during the point of contact with the vendor.

In a preferred aspect of the present invention, a system is provided wherein a vendor, at a point of contact with a consumer: (a) obtains information about the consumer; (b) accesses a computer system maintained by a credit grantor (i.e., any credit granting institution; any agents of a credit granting institution; any subcontractors of a credit granting institution; any credit bureau, agent of a credit bureau or any other independent contractors acting under contract with and on behalf of a credit granting institution; and/or any other entities operated by or on behalf of a credit granting institution) and communicates the information about the consumer to the computer system where that information is compared to data regarding the creditworthiness of a multitude of individuals stored in a data base; (c) receives information from the computer system regarding whether the consumer prequalifies for a credit account; (d1) if the consumer does not prequalify, the vendor proceeds to step (e), or, (d2) alternatively, if the consumer does prequalify, the vendor advises the consumer of an opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account and instructs the consumer on how to enroll or apply; and, (e) proceeds with the purpose of the point of contact.

In another preferred aspect of the present invention, a system is provided wherein a vendor, at a point of contact with a consumer: (a) obtains information about the consumer; (b) accesses a computer system maintained by a credit grantor (i.e., any credit granting institution; any agents of a credit granting institution; any subcontractors of a credit granting institution; any credit bureau, agent of a credit bureau or any other independent contractors acting under contract with and on behalf of a credit granting institution; and/or any other entities operated by or on behalf of a credit granting institution) and communicates the information about the consumer to the computer

5 system where that information is compared to data regarding the creditworthiness of a multitude of individuals stored in a data base; (c) receives information from the computer system regarding whether the consumer prequalifies for a credit account; (d1) if the consumer does not prequalify, the vendor proceeds to step (e), or, (d2) alternatively, if the consumer does prequalify, the vendor offers the consumer the opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account and, if the consumer declines the offer, the vendor proceeds to step (e), alternatively, if the consumer agrees to enroll or apply, the vendor: (i) obtains additional information from the consumer as necessary to complete an enrollment or credit application for the credit account, (ii) accesses the computer system and
10 communicates the additional information about the consumer to the computer system where that information is used to process the application, (iii) receives information from the computer system regarding whether the consumer qualifies for the credit account, and (iv) notifies the consumer whether the consumer qualifies, optionally, the vendor only notifies the consumer of the result of the application if the consumer qualifies for credit, otherwise the vendor informs the consumer that he or she will be notified of the result of the application via subsequent notification; (e) proceeds with the purpose of the point of contact, preferably, in the event the consumer qualifies for credit, the consumer is given the opportunity to use the credit account to complete a transaction with the vendor.

20 The prequalification step and the application/qualification steps preferably take place in real time, preferably the prequalification step is performed simultaneously with other steps taken to complete the transaction between the consumer and vendor such that the prequalification step does not increase the time necessary to complete that transaction.

25 In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the data base is maintained by a credit bureau or an agent of a credit bureau under contract with and on behalf of the credit bureau or a credit granting institution. In a preferred aspect of the present invention, the data base is periodically updated with new consumer credit data obtained

from at least one credit bureau. Most preferably the data in the data base is updated at least quarterly.

Brief Description of the Drawing

5 **Figure 1** is a schematic flow diagram of a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Invention

10 The system and method of the present invention preferably provides a means for prequalifying and selectively offering an opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account to those consumers satisfying certain preselection criteria, wherein the prequalification and opportunity to enroll or apply for credit occur during a point of contact between a consumer and a vendor and wherein the consumer is unaware that he or she is being prequalified.

15 The system and method of the present invention includes: (a) automatically prequalifying a consumer for credit at a point of contact with a vendor; and, (b) selectively offering an opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account to the consumer, only if the consumer satisfies certain preselection criteria; wherein the consumer is unaware that he or she is being prequalified; wherein the prequalification process is facilitated using information obtained from the consumer by the vendor during
20 the point of contact or at some previous time, which information may include, for example, one or more of the following: the consumer's name, the consumer's home address, the consumer's shipping address, the consumer's social security number, the consumer's home telephone number, and the consumer's e-mail address; and wherein the offer to enroll or apply for a credit account is made during the point of contact with the
25 vendor.

 The term "point of contact" as used herein refers to a span of time during which a consumer and a vendor interact, for any reason, in person, over the phone or electronically, e.g., via modem, over the internet, etc. Preferably, the point of contact

arises when a consumer and a vendor interact to purchase/sell goods and/or services, to request/provide information about a product or service, to enroll or become a registered user in a service, or to register a product for service or warranty purposes. Most preferably, the point of contact arises when a consumer visits a vendor's website, when a consumer calls a vendor to place an order for goods and/or services, when a vendor calls or electronically contacts a consumer to offer for sale goods and/or services, or when a vendor calls or electronically contacts a consumer to provide product or service information.

The term "credit grantor" as used herein refers to any credit granting institution; any agents of a credit granting institution; any subcontractors of a credit granting institution; any credit bureau, agent of a credit bureau or any other independent contractors acting under contract with and on behalf of a credit granting institution; and/or any other entities operated by or on behalf of a credit granting institution.

When consumers and vendors interact to transact business in person, over the phone, or electronically, e.g., via modem, over the internet, vendors often request that the consumer provide certain information. The information requested may include one or more of the following: the consumer's name, the consumer's home address, the consumer's shipping address, the consumer's social security number, the consumer's home telephone number, and the consumer's e-mail address. In the event the consumer desires to make a purchase, the information requested may further include a credit card number issued in the name of the consumer. Under the system and method of the present invention, the information obtained by the vendor from the consumer is used to determine whether the consumer prequalifies for credit. Specifically, the information is compared to data regarding the creditworthiness of a multitude of individuals stored in a data base. In a most preferred aspect of the present invention, the data base includes identifying information only on those individuals who satisfy certain preselection criteria. For example, in one preferred aspect of the present invention, the data base includes only the name, address, social security number, home phone number and e-mail address, if

any, of individuals who satisfy certain preselection criteria. Preferably, the data included in the data base is updated periodically using information obtained from or by at least one credit bureau. Most preferably, the data included in the data base is updated at least quarterly.

5 The preselection criteria used to determine the creditworthiness of a given individual may vary from one credit grantor to another. Notwithstanding, the information used to determine an individual's creditworthiness is well known in the credit granting industry.

10 **Figure 1** is a schematic flow diagram of a preferred embodiment of the system and method of the present invention. The system and method of the invention begins at a point of contact between a consumer and a vendor, step S1. The vendor obtains information from the consumer, step S2. The vendor communicates this information to a credit grantor, which information the credit grantor uses to determine if the consumer prequalifies for a credit account, step S3. If the consumer does not prequalify, the
15 vendor proceeds with the purpose of the point of contact. If the consumer prequalifies, the vendor: (a) advises the consumer of an opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account, instructs the consumer on how to enroll or apply for the credit account and proceeds with the purpose of the point of contact, step S4(a); or, alternatively, (b) offers the consumer an opportunity to enroll or apply for the credit account, step S4(b). If the
20 consumer declines the offer, the vendor proceeds with the purpose of the point of contact. If the consumer agrees to enroll or apply, the vendor obtains any additional information necessary to complete an enrollment or credit application, step S5. The information in the application is communicated to the credit grantor so that the application can be processed, step S6. If the consumer does not qualify for credit, the
25 vendor preferably does not so advise the consumer. Rather, it is preferred that the vendor advise the consumer that he or she will be notified of the result of the application via subsequent notification, step S7(a) and proceeds with the purpose of the point of contact, step S10. Alternatively, if the application is approved, the consumer is

preferably so notified, more preferably, the consumer is further notified regarding the terms of the credit offered, step S7(b). Optionally, the vendor preferably gives the consumer the opportunity to use the new credit account to complete a transaction with the vendor during the point of contact, step S8. Optionally, the vendor preferably offers the consumer a benefit for using the new credit account to complete a transaction during the point of contact, step S9. The consumer and vendor proceed with the purpose of the point of contact, step S10.

The point of contact between the consumer and the vendor, step S1, as described above, is the span of time during which the consumer and the vendor interact, preferably to transact business. Preferably, the point of contact between the consumer and the vendor occurs in person, over the telephone or electronically, e.g., via modem, over the internet, most preferably, over the internet.

The vendor may obtain information from the consumer, step S2, as a preliminary matter. That is, for example, a vendor may request information from consumers when they visit the vendor's website, e.g., name, home address, shipping address, social security number, home phone number or e-mail address. The vendor may request the information from the consumer when the consumer requests to make a purchase of goods and/or services from the vendor. Alternatively, the vendor may already have on record information regarding the consumer. For example, the vendor may retain records regarding consumers who have previously made a purchase from the vendor. The vendor may also retain records on prospective consumers who are, for example, on the vendor's mailing list.

Notwithstanding whether the vendor actively obtains the information from the consumer during the point of contact or whether the information resides in the vendor's records, the method and system of the present invention requires that a certain minimum modicum of information be communicated to the credit grantor to facilitate prequalification, step S3. The minimum modicum of information communicated may preferably comprise at least one of the following:

- (a) consumer's name;
- (b) consumer's home address;
- (c) consumer's shipping address;
- (d) consumer's e-mail address;
- 5 (e) consumer's home telephone number;
- (f) consumer's social security number; and,
- (g) other identifying information, for example, a credit card number or a driver's license number.

10 Prequalification comprises a comparison of the consumer's information with data stored in a data base. The data base will include identifying information on a multitude of individuals along with an indication of each such individual's creditworthiness. If the consumer's data is included in the data base and is indicated to be creditworthy, the consumer will prequalify and the vendor will be so notified. Alternatively, if the consumer's data is not included in the data base or if the consumer's data is included, but
15 the consumer is not indicated to be creditworthy, the vendor will be so notified.

In the event the consumer prequalifies, the vendor will, in one aspect of this embodiment of the present invention, (1) advise the consumer of an opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account, (2) instruct the consumer on how to enroll or apply for the credit account and (3) proceed with the purpose of the point of contact, step 4(a).
20 Alternatively, in another aspect of this embodiment of the present invention, the vendor will provide the consumer with an offer to enroll or apply for credit, step S4(b). If the consumer agrees to enroll or apply, the vendor will obtain any additional information needed to complete an enrollment or credit application, step S5. The information used to perform credit checks and to enroll or apply for credit are well known in the credit
25 industry.

The information included in the enrollment or credit application is communicated from the vendor to the credit grantor for processing, step S6. The procedures used to process enrollment or credit applications are well known in the credit industry.

In the event the application is denied, to minimize the cost to the vendor of any adverse reaction caused by the denial of the application, it is preferred that the vendor not be the party to inform the consumer of a denied application. Accordingly, the vendor will preferably inform the consumer that he or she will be notified of the result of the enrollment or application for credit via subsequent notification, step S7(a).

Alternatively, in the event the application is approved, the consumer will be notified by the vendor that the application was approved and, optionally, of the terms and conditions of the credit account, step S7(b). Preferably, the credit grantor will create a customized credit account offer to the consumer based on the consumer's profile and level of creditworthiness. For example, the customizable features of the credit account may include the product type, e.g. gold card, platinum card, and the like; annual percentage rate; annual fee; rewards programs; and the like.

Preferably, in the event the consumer decides to make a purchase of goods and/or services from the vendor, the vendor will ask the consumer if he or she would like to use the new credit account to make that purchase, step S8. More preferably, the vendor will, optionally, additionally offer the consumer a benefit if the consumer uses the new credit account to make a purchase of goods and/or services, step S9. The benefit might comprise, for example, free merchandise, free shipping, a discount on the goods and/or services being purchased, etc.

Preferably, the information communicated back and forth between the consumer and vendor and may be transferred face to face in person, over the telephone, or electronically using any means of data communication. The communication back and forth between the vendor and credit grantor may be transferred electronically using any means of data communication.

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, a consumer using an interactive device connects to the internet and accesses any one of a number of ever increasing vendor websites and initiates a transaction, preferably a purchase of goods and/or services. The vendor website prompts the consumer to provide certain

information, for example, the consumer's name and address. Upon receipt of the requested information, the vendor website preferably initiates a prequalification process by transmitting the information to a credit grantor's computer system where the information is compared to data regarding the creditworthiness of a multitude of individuals stored in a data base. The credit grantor's computer system communicates the result of the prequalification to the vendor website. If the consumer prequalifies, the vendor website will prompt the consumer with a screen display offering the consumer an opportunity to enroll or apply for credit or to proceed with the consumer/vendor transaction. Should the consumer proceed by completing the application for credit by inputting the necessary information, that information is communicated to the credit grantor's computer system where the application is processed. The result of the application process is communicated to the vendor website. The vendor website notifies the consumer of an approved application with a screen displaying the terms and conditions of the credit account. Alternatively, the vendor website notifies the consumer of a denied application by displaying a screen which states that the application has been denied or that the consumer will be notified regarding the result of the application via subsequent communication. Optionally, if the application is approved, the vendor website preferably prompts the consumer with a screen display which inquires whether the consumer wishes to use the new credit account to make a purchase. In addition, the inquiry preferably includes a statement offering some benefit to the consumer for using the new credit account to make a purchase, e.g., free shipping, price discount on merchandise purchased.

The interactive device used by the consumer preferably comprises a computer with a keyboard, a pointing device, such as a mouse or a wand, a touch screen display device, or some combination thereof.

The consumer's interactive device, the vendor website and the credit grantor's computer system are preferably all inter-connected through the internet, via

telecommunication lines, data transmission cables or any other means facilitating the transmission of data therebetween.

Under the present invention, the credit grantor's computer system may comprise a plurality of computers and data storage facilities that are electronically interconnected with one another through the internet, an intranet, via telecommunication lines, data

transmission cables or any other means facilitating the transmission of data therebetween. One skilled in the art will recognize that the specific computer (or computers) which accesses the memory means, comprising the data base storing the information regarding the creditworthiness of a multitude of individuals, to perform the prequalification may be different from the computer (or computers) used to process the enrollment or credit application. Notwithstanding, one skilled in the art will recognize that both the computer (or computers) that accesses the memory means comprising the data base and the computer (or computers) that processes the application are all part of the credit grantor's computer system.

We claim:

1. A credit prequalification/granting system, comprising:
 - (a) prequalifying a consumer for a credit account at a point of contact between the consumer and a vendor by comparing information regarding the consumer to data stored in a data base; and,
 - (b) selectively offering the consumer an opportunity to enroll or apply for a credit account only if the consumer satisfies certain preselection criteria.
2. The system of claim 1, further comprising:
 - (c) obtaining from the consumer any additional information needed to complete an enrollment or credit application for the credit account; and,
 - (d) processing the application.
3. The system of claim 2, further comprising:
 - (e) notifying the consumer immediately of the result of the application.
4. The system of claim 2, further comprising:
 - (e) informing the consumer that he or she will be notified of the result of the application via subsequent notification in the event the application is denied.
5. The system of claim 1, wherein the prequalification takes place in real time.
6. The system of claim 3, further comprising:
 - (f) customizing the terms of the credit account based on the application.
7. The system of claim 6, further comprising:
 - (g) advising the consumer of the terms of the credit account.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein the data stored in the data base is periodically updated.
9. The system of claim 8, wherein the data stored in the data base is updated at least quarterly.
10. The system of claim 1, wherein the point of contact results when the consumer contacts the vendor to make a purchase of goods and/or services.
11. The system of claim 1, further comprising:
 - (c) instructing the consumer on how to enroll or apply for the credit account.
12. A credit prequalification/granting system, comprising:
 - (a) obtaining information about a consumer at a point of contact;
 - (b) accessing a computer system maintained by or on behalf of a credit grantor;
 - (c) communicating the information to the computer system where the information is compared to data stored in a data base; and,
 - (d) receiving information from the computer system regarding whether the consumer prequalifies for a credit account; and,
 - (e) notifying the consumer that the consumer prequalifies for a credit account;wherein the consumer prequalifies.
13. The credit prequalification/granting system of claim 12, further comprising:
 - (f) instructing the consumer on how to enroll or apply for the credit account.
14. The credit prequalification/granting system of claim 12, further comprising:

- (f) offering the consumer an opportunity to enroll or apply for the credit account;
 - (g) obtaining any additional information from the consumer necessary to complete an enrollment or credit application for the credit account;
 - (h) submitting the information in the application to the computer system; and,
 - (i) (1) notifying the consumer that the application was approved;
- wherein the consumer agrees to apply for the credit account; and wherein the credit application is approved.

15. The credit prequalification/granting system of claim 16, further comprising:

- (j) offering the consumer the opportunity to use the credit account to make a purchase.

16. The system of claim 12, wherein the point of contact results when the consumer contacts the vendor to make a purchase of goods and/or services.

17. The system of claim 15, further comprising:

- (i) (2) customizing the credit account for the consumer.

18. The system of claim 15, further comprising:

- (i) (2) advising the consumer of the terms of the credit account.

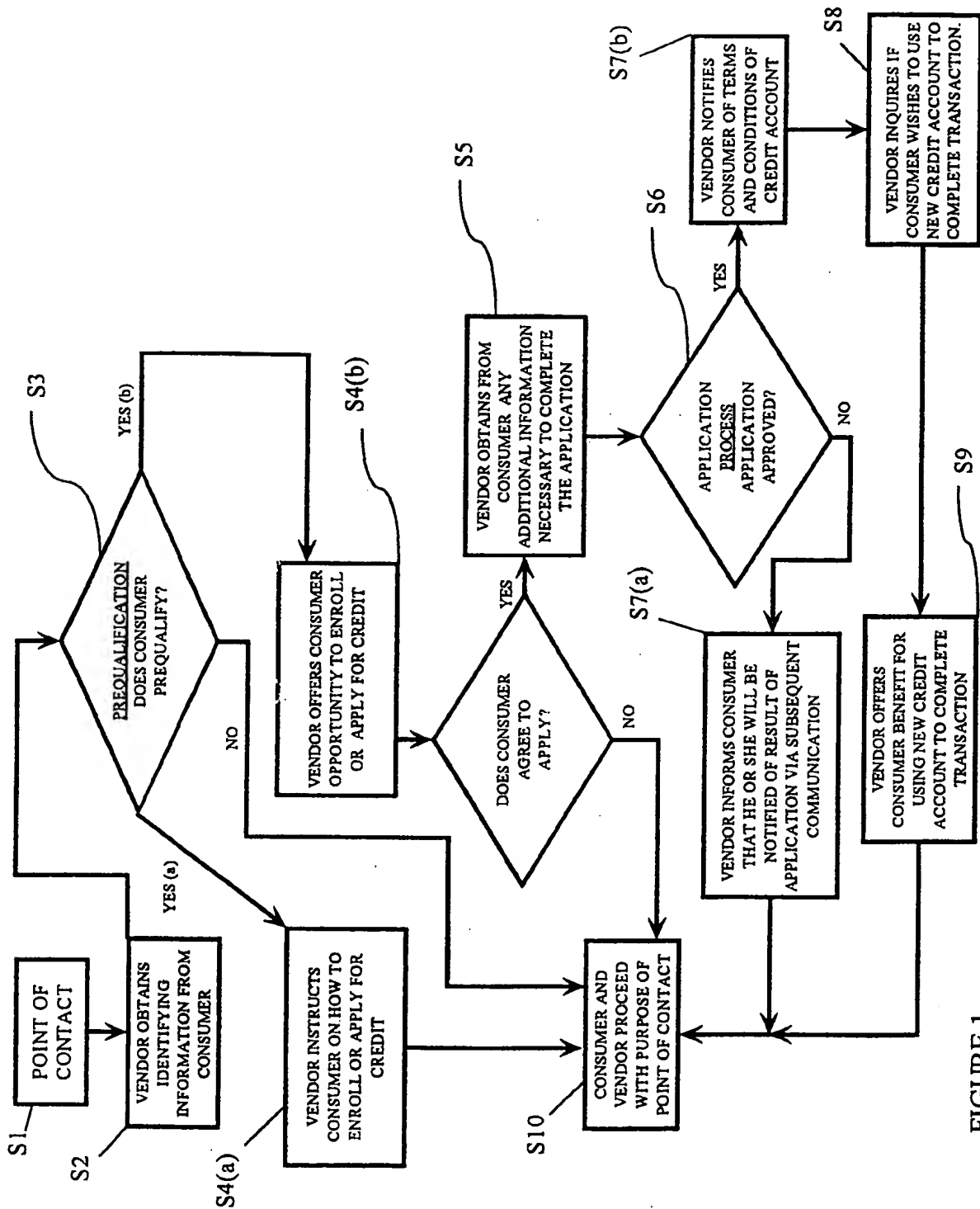



FIGURE 1

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US00/08673

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC  : G06F 15/20
US CL : 705/35, 39, 38;

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
U.S. : 705/35, 39, 38, 1; 235/375, 379, 380

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
DIALOG files: 15, 9, 623, 810, 275, 624, 813, 636, 621, 16, 160, 148, 20, 625, 268, 626, 267. search terms: credit, loan, prequalify/prequalification, grant, preselect, criteria, consumer, customer, user, vendor, database, file, data, enroll, apply, account, application, computer, processor. IEEE DATABASE: search terms same as above

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,025,138 A (CUERVO) 18 June 1991 (18.06.1991), entirety	1-18
X	US 5,239,462 A (JONES et al), 24 August 1993 (24.08.1993), columns 3 and 5-8	1-18
X	US 5,274,547 A (ZOFFEL et al) 28 December 1993 (28.12.1993) entirety	1-18
X	US 5,611,052 A (DYKSTRA et al) 11 March 1997 (11.03.1997) entirety	1-18
X	US 5,797,133 A (JONES et al) 18 August 1998 (18.08.1998) entirety	1-18
Y	US 5,809,478 A (GRECO et al) 15 September 1998 (15.09.1998) entirety	1-18
A	McGINNIS, P., 'The Place of Technology in Generating Credit Opportunities', Journal of Lending & Credit Risk Management, v79, n10, p. 15-24, June 1997. Dialog file 268: Banking Information Services Dialog Accession # 00312057.	1-18
A	'Reps Offer Customers Instant Credit Approval. (Trans Leasing International's Instant Access Program)', Health Industry Today, v54, n4, p. 20(1), April, 1991. Dialog file 148: Gale Group Trade & Industry DB. Dialog Accession # 05173105.	1-18
A	SULLIVAN, D., 'Scoring Borrower Risk. (Credit Scoring)', Mortgage Banking, v55, n2, p.94(5), Nov. 1994. Dialog file 148: Gale Group Trade & Industry DB. Dialog Accession # 07621976.	1-18



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	*T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"E" earlier application or patent published on or after the international filing date	"Y" documents of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"&" document member of the same patent family
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

22 May 2000 (22.05.2000)

Date of mailing of the international search report

7 JUL 2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Box PCT
Washington, D.C. 20231

Facsimile No. (703)305-3230

Authorized officer

Tod E Swann



Telephone No. 703-308-7791

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US00/08673

C (Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	SCHMITT, S., 'CUs and Remote Services. (Credit Unions and Computer-based Remote Services)', Credit Union Executive, v36, n5, p.8(3), Sep/Oct. 1996. Dialog file 148: Gale Group Trade & Industry DB. Dialog Accession # 08991353.	1-18
A	MIDDLETON, R., 'Lending by the Numbers: Credit-review Software is Coolly Objective. How will you fare?', Business Week, n3599, p. 16, Oct. 12, 1998. Dialog file 623: Business Week, Dialog Accession # 00745301.	1-18
A	BRILL, J., 'The Importance of Credit Scoring Models in Improving Cash Flow and Collections', Business Credit, v100, n1, p.16-17, Jan. 1998. Dialog file 15: ABI/INFORM *. Dialog Accession # 01566656.	1-18